

## **Schools and Do-Not-Attempt Resuscitation Orders**

Many children who would previously have died from a variety of life-threatening conditions are today surviving thanks to increased medical knowledge and technology. Indeed, many of these children are able to attend school, while realizing they may still be at risk of dying. Sometimes the families of these children have made a decision to limit resuscitative efforts by signing a Do Not Attempt Resuscitation (DNAR) order for their child.

A DNAR order presents unique challenges to school districts. The Center for Practical Bioethics recently reviewed the school board policies (or guidelines) addressing DNAR orders in the 51 districts comprising the eight-county Greater Kansas City area.

Many of these districts are to be applauded for their response to this difficult decision. The majority of the Missouri school district policies were taken, at least in part, from generic policy statements drafted by either the Missouri School Board Association (MSBA) or the Missouri Consultants for Education (MCE).

Both the MSBA and the MCE advocate individual review of each request for a district to honor a Do Not Attempt Resuscitation order. While not all districts have embraced this individual approach, the Center for Practical Bioethics is encouraged by the potential for positive change.

Data indicates that annually 450 children die in the metropolitan Kansas City area, while nearly 18,000 live daily with the reality of a life limiting and/or life-threatening condition. Some of these 18,000 may be able to attend school but want to do so with the assurance that their DNAR order will be honored if an episode potentially leading to their death occurs while at school.

As quoted in the Institute of Medicine Report, *When Children Die: Improving Palliative and End-of-Life Care for Children and Their Families*, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP, 2000) recommends that pediatricians and parents meet with relevant school personnel to explain the child's medical condition and the goals of care and to hear the concerns of other parents and school personnel. It also urges that all parties be realistic, flexible, and ready to negotiate. The Kansas City Partnership to Advance Pediatric Palliative Care endorses this recommendation.

*The Kansas City Partnership to Advance Pediatric Palliative Care is a community-wide effort, facilitated by the Center for Practical Bioethics, to transform Kansas City into a Center of Excellence in pediatric palliative care.*